

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 EURE-00 SSC-01 BNDE-00 JUSE-00 SNM-02

PM-07 NSC-10 SS-15 RSC-01 H-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 PA-03 USIA-12 PRS-01 /090 W
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P R 241815 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1475

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

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E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: PINT, PINS, UK

SUBJECT: LORD JELLCOE RESIGNS FROM THE

CABINET: HEATH STATEMENT ON SEX SCANDAL

REF: LONDON 6089

1. PRIME MINISTER HEATH TODAY DISCLOSED IN COMMONS THE CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO THE RESIGNATION OF LORD LAMBTON, UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR RAF ON MAY 22, AND CABINET MEMBER LORD JELLCOE, LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS AND LORD PRIVY SEAL, ON MAY 24. HEATH'S STATEMENT INDICATED THAT THE INDIVIDUALS HAD RESIGNED AS SOON AS THEY WERE INFORMED THAT EVIDENCE EXISTED SHOWING THEIR INVOLVEMENT WITH PROSTITUTES. THIS IS NOT A CRIMINAL OFFENSE, BUT IN THE CASE OF LAMBTON CHARGES HAVE ALSO BEEN BROUGHT FOR POSSESSION OF DANGEROUS DRUGS.

2. HEATH ASSURED THE COMMONS THAT FROM THE MOMENT INITIAL EVIDENCE WAS PRESENTED TO HIM, ON APRIL 9, HE HAD ACTED TO ASSURE THAT A FULL INVESTIGATION WAS MADE AND THAT NATIONAL SECURITY INTERESTS WERE NOT INVOLVED. HE SAID " ON THE INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO ME, I CAN TELL THE HOUSE THERE ARE NO GROUNDS FOR SUPPOSING THAT ANY
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OTHER MINISTERS OR ANY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE IS INVOLVED. THE HOOE SECRETARY (CARR) AND I HAVE BEEN CONCERNED FROM THE OUTSET TO ENSURE THAT THE SECURITY OF THE STATE IS PROTECTED WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO THE CONDUCT OF ENQUIRIES INTO POSSIBLE CRIMINAL OFFENSES."

3. HEATH WENT ON TO SAY " I THINK THE HOUSE WILL EXPECT THAT THE MATTER SHOULD BE SUBMITTED TO INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY, SUBJECT TO CONSULTATION WITH THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION, I... PROPOSE TO INVITE THE SECURITY COMMISSION TO VERIFY THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO BREACH OF SECURITY AS A RESULT OF THE INCIDENTS..." IN RESPONSE, HAROLD WILSON ACKNOWLEDGED THE SPEED AND THE SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY THAT THE MINISTERS HAD SHOWN IN IMMEDIATELY RESIGNING AND DOING SO WITH DIGNITY. HE CLEARLY RESERVED HIS POSITION BY SAYING THAT THE COUNTRY WOULD DEMAND THE FULLEST INQUIRY INTO ALL THE FACTS BEARING ON NATIONAL SECURITY.

4. COMMENT: A SCANDAL INVOLVING TWO IMPORTANT GOVT OFFICERS IS OBVIOUSLY A SERIOUS MATTER AND LORD JELLCOE' S RESIGNATION PARTICULARLY DISMAYED GOVT SUPPORTERS. OUR READING OF THE SITUATION, HOWEVER, IS THAT HEATH' S PROMPT ACTION AND FORTHRIGHT STATEMENT IN COMMONS HAS PRETTY MUCH ANSWERED THE QUESTIONS THAT WERE BEING ASKED BY MP' S AND THE PUBLIC* WAS NATIONAL SECURITY INVOLVED, WERE THERE OTHER GOVT MINISTERS OR OFFICIALS INVOLVED, WAS THERE PROMPT ACTION ONCE EVIDENCE WAS PRESENTED AND WAS THERE ANY ATTEMPT TO COVER UP POSSIBLE WRONG- DOING? THE IMMEDIATE REACTION IN PARLIAMENT TO HIS STATEMENT HAS BEEN POSITIVE.

ANNENBERG

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 MAY 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: boyleja
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973LONDON06152
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: n/a
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730553/aaaajswq.tel
Line Count: 97
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 73 LONDON 6089
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: boyleja
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 AUG 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07-Aug-2001 by boyleja>; APPROVED <12-Sep-2001 by boyleja>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> mcm 980304
Subject: LORD JELICOE RESIGNS FROM THE CABINET: HEATH STATEMENT ON SEX SCANDAL
TAGS: PINS, UK, PINT
To: BONN
EUR
NATO BRUSSELS
PARIS
SECSTATE WASHDC
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

